

REMARKS

The above-identified patent application has been reviewed in light of the Examiner's Action dated August 11, 2006. Claims 1 and 12 have been amended without intending to abandon or to dedicate to the public any patentable subject matter. No Claims have been canceled. Accordingly, Claims 1-7, 9-13, 15-17 and 19-25 are now pending. As set forth herein, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections of the claims are respectfully requested.

Initially, the undersigned would like to thank the Examiner for the courtesies extended during brief telephone conferences held on September 20, 2006, and on October 11, 2006. During those telephone conferences, the undersigned presented distinctions between the claimed invention and the Bauer and Griffin references. Such distinctions are further discussed in these remarks. No agreement regarding allowable subject matter was reached.

The present invention is generally directed to a readerboard system or a method of advertising in which an overall graphical depiction is distributed among a number of panel elements. The panel elements are sized such that they can be mounted to a conventional readerboard, and at least two of the panel elements are separated by one another by the track of the readerboard. The use of multiple panel elements over which a substantially continuous message is displayed has a number of advantages. For example, the message is easier to place on a readerboard, than a single panel. This is particularly true when the readerboard is elevated. In addition, by using multiple panels separated by the tracks of the readerboard, the panels are more resistant to being blown out of the readerboard by wind as compared to panels spanning more than one row of the readerboard. However, this arrangement does prevent portions of the overall message corresponding to the tracks between adjacent panels from being visible to a viewer.

Claims 1-7, 9-13, 15-17 and 19-25 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6, 216,375 to Griffin ("Griffin") in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,606,834 to Bauer ("Bauer"). However, it is submitted that each and every element of the claims rejected as obvious can not be found in the cited references whether those

references are considered alone or in combination. In particular, the cited references do not teach, suggest, or disclose distributing a complete image using multiple panels held in the tracks of a conventional readerboard such that a portion of the displayed image is obscured, as claimed. Accordingly, the rejections under 35 U.S.C. §103 should be reconsidered and withdrawn.

The Griffin reference is cited for disclosing a conventional readerboard with panels that can be used to display messages. As noted in the Office Action, the top and bottom edges of the panels of Griffin that engage the tracks are not displayed to the viewer. The panels of Griffin are "character plates 23" that are provided with an alphanumeric character. However, it should be noted that the portions of the panels of Griffin that are not displayed are blank. Accordingly, Griffin does not teach, suggest or describe a system in which a portion of an overall message in areas corresponding to a track of a readerboard is not displayed. Instead, Griffin discusses a conventional readerboard system in which complete textual characters or graphic images are displayed by simple panels. Moreover, Griffin does not discuss displaying complementary portions of a unitary graphic image or of a single textual character on adjacent panels. There is no teaching, suggestion or disclosure of extending a single textual character or a single graphical element (*i.e.* a semiotic element other than a word) across a number of panels that are separated from one another by a track of a readerboard.

The Bauer reference is cited by the Office Action for disclosing an image panel that is divided into a plurality of image strips in which a portion of the image is obscured by tracks. The Bauer patent is directed to a method of, and panel for, applying a graphic image to slat walls. The method includes dividing an image into a plurality of longitudinally extending strips that are cut to be of a height or lateral dimension generally corresponding to the lateral extent of a slat. In order to maintain the continuity of the overall image when these strips are applied to a slat wall, small longitudinally extending portions of the image between strips are cut out and discarded (Bauer, col.5, lines 1-14.) Although in one embodiment Bauer discusses using a panel having top and bottom tabs for holding image strips, those image strips are not complete because portions of the

strips have been cut out and discarded. In addition, the tracks are not part of a readerboard. Instead, they are part of panels 10 that are interconnected to a slat wall 11, with gaps or spaces corresponding to slots 13 in the slat wall 11 separating the tabs in adjacent panels. (Bauer, col. 5, lines 31-45; Fig. 5)

Accordingly, with respect to Claim 1, it can be appreciated that the cited references do not teach, suggest or disclose first and second semiotic element that are continuous with respect to one another along corresponding edges of said first and second panel elements such that said at least a portion of the substantially continuous message is formed without discontinuities when said first and second panel elements are registered with one another separate from the readerboard with the bottom edge of the first panel element and the top edge of the second panel element butted against one another. Instead, the Bauer reference, which is cited with respect to this aspect of the invention, requires that strips be cut from the panels containing a graphic image. Therefore, Bauer does not teach a system in which an image is formed across two panel elements without discontinuities.

In addition, the cited references do not teach, suggest or describe first and second panel elements having first and second portions of a substantially continuous message formed thereon that are separated from one another by the T-shaped first track of said readerboard. Instead, the Bauer reference, which is cited against this aspect of the claim, is for use with a slat wall, and not with a readerboard. In addition, the embodiment of Bauer that provides panels with tabs that can receive graphic strips does not convert the slat wall into a readerboard with T-shaped channels. Instead, L-shaped channels are formed. In addition, the L-shaped channels of adjacent panels are separated from one another by slots. Accordingly, the structure of Bauer results in adjacent panels being separated from one another by some distance.

Therefore, the cited references do not teach, suggest or describe panels that can be combined to display at least a portion of a substantially continuous message without discontinuities. The cited references also do not teach, suggest or describe placing such panels in a readerboard such that they are separated by a track with a T-shaped cross-

section and such that a portion of the substantially continuous message is obscured. Accordingly, for at least these reasons, the rejections of Claims 1-6, 20, 22, 24 and 25 as obvious should be reconsidered and withdrawn.

Claim 7 recites a method of advertising in which a message is distributed across a plurality of panel elements such that first and second panel elements contain first and second complementary semiotic elements. The claim further recites placing the first and second panel elements in a readerboard in a first relationship to one another to display a message. A portion of the first semiotic element adjacent the bottom edge of the first panel element is obscured by a first channel of a first one of the tracks of the readerboard. A portion of the second semiotic element adjacent a top edge of the second panel element is obscured by a second channel of the first one of the tracks of the readerboard. These features are not present in the cited references. Instead, the Griffin reference teaches the use of conventional readerboard letters or panels, and is not cited against these unique features of the present invention. The Bauer reference discusses panels that each have top and bottom tabs. However, there is no structure in Bauer that provides tracks having first and second channels. Instead the tabs in Bauer are separated from one another by slots. Moreover, because of the separation between tabs of adjacent panels, Bauer requires that portions of images be removed from strips received by the panels. Accordingly, for at least these reasons, the rejections of Claims 7, and 9-11 should be reconsidered and withdrawn.

With respect to Claim 12, the cited references do not teach, suggest or disclose a graphic image or a letter that is complete in an area corresponding to an interface between the first and second panel elements. In addition, those references do not teach, suggest or describe a portion of the graphic image or letter that is obscured by the track of a readerboard. Accordingly, for at least these reasons, the rejections of Claims 12-13, 15-17, 19 and 21 as obvious should be reconsidered and withdrawn.


Application No. 10/697,681

The application is now appearing to be in form for allowance, early notification of same is respectfully requested. The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned if doing so would expedite prosecution or allowance of the application.

Respectfully submitted,

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